

Omaha Airspace Redesign Environmental Assessment

Federal Aviation Administration

This environmental assessment becomes a Federal Document when evaluated and signed
by the responsible FAA official

Annette Davis

Responsible FAA Official

11-14-05

Date

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**Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration**

**Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)/Record of Decision (ROD)
For the
Implementation of the Omaha Airspace Redesign**

I. FONSI/ROD

This FONSI/ROD provides final agency determinations and approvals for the Federal actions by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) needed to implement modifications to the airspace and air traffic control procedures used in the Omaha Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) airspace area. Furthermore, this FONSI/ROD:

- Completes the FAA's thorough and careful environmental review and decision-making process, and is prepared and issued to announce and document certain Federal actions and decisions in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) [42 U.S.C. Section 4321, *et seq.*], the implementing regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) [40 CFR Parts 1500-1508] and FAA directives [Order 1050.1E, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*, and Order 5050.4A, *Airport Environmental Handbook*]. This FONSI/ROD is also used by the FAA to demonstrate and document its compliance with the several procedural and substantive requirements of aeronautical, environmental, programmatic, and other statutes and regulations that apply to FAA decisions and actions on proposed actions;
- Provides the final Federal determinations and approvals based on environmental analysis and findings in the attached Final Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Omaha Airspace Redesign (OAR). The FAA's decisions are based on the information contained in the Final EA and all other applicable documents which were available and considered, and which constitute the administrative record;
- Approves certain Federal actions associated with modifications to the airspace and air traffic control procedures used in the Omaha TRACON airspace area. The Proposed Action results in no airport-related development.

In reaching this determination, consideration has been given to 49 U.S.C. 40101(d)(4), which gives the FAA various responsibilities and holds it accountable for controlling the use of navigable airspace and regulating civil and military operations in that airspace in the interest of safety and efficiency of both of these operations. Additionally, consideration has been given to 49 U.S.C. 40103(b)(2) which authorizes and directs the FAA Administrator to prescribe air traffic rules and regulations governing the flight of aircraft, for the navigation, protection, and identification of aircraft, and the protection of persons and property on the ground, and for the efficient utilization of the navigable airspace, including rules as to safe altitudes of flight and rules for the prevention of collision between aircraft, between aircraft and land or water vehicles, and between aircraft and airborne objects.

Furthermore, the FAA has given careful consideration to: (a) the aviation safety and operational objectives of the project in light of the various aeronautical factors and judgments presented; (b) the need to enhance efficiency of the national air transportation system; and (c) the anticipated environmental impacts of the project.

II. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In April of 1996, the FAA Administrator announced that the FAA would begin a comprehensive review and redesign of the United States Airspace. This endeavor became known as the National Airspace Redesign (NAR) project. The essence of NAR was to review all national airspace resources to determine if they provided for an efficient national airspace system. The goal of NAR was to increase system flexibility, predictability, and access; maintain and improve safety; improve efficiency and reduce delays; and support the evolution of emerging technologies. Each FAA region was tasked with identifying any national airspace system resources that needed to function more effectively and examine alternatives to correct any noted deficiencies.

The proposed OAR is the culmination of the NAR process for with regard to aircraft operations in the Omaha TRACON airspace area.

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE & NEED

Historically, traffic volume in the Omaha TRACON airspace area has not warranted the need for standardized aircraft routes; aircraft are routed on an ad hoc basis. Although this process works satisfactorily when traffic volumes are low, it proves very inefficient when traffic volumes increase. Increases in the volume of air carrier and air taxi traffic in the Omaha area, as well as increased operations in the Minneapolis Air Route Traffic Control Center (ZMP) airspace have generated the need for structured air traffic control procedures.

The purpose of the proposed OAR project is to standardize routes and procedures in order to reduce the number of pilot-to-controller and controller-to-controller voice communications, thereby enhancing safety and efficiency.

The need for the project results from the substantial number of voice communications necessary to transmit and verify non-standard air traffic control operating procedures. These communications increase pilot and controller workload and increase the probability of control instructions being misunderstood. The impacts of these operational inefficiencies affect not only the Omaha TRACON, but Lincoln TRACON and ZMP as well.

IV. ALTERNATIVES

The alternatives analyzed within the attached Final EA included the following:

The No Action Alternative

This alternative maintains the existing airspace structure and flight procedures.

The Proposed Action – The HOWRY Alternative

In early 2000, a three member task force was charged with developing an airspace redesign plan that would provide a solution to the inefficiencies associated with the Omaha airspace. The task force developed two airspace designs; HOWRY and SALT. Subsequent to developing the two

airspace redesign alternatives, both alternatives were tested using Air Traffic Coach, a simulator program that can be used to test proposed procedures and determine their feasibility. Based on the simulations, SALTI was found not to meet the purpose and need of the project and was eliminated from consideration. Simulation revealed that SALTI increased the amount of required voice communications, reduced the amount of airspace available for departures, required substantial changes to arrival routes, and decreased the amount of airspace available for gradual descent. As such, the HOWRY became the preferred alternative. Figure 2-2 of the attached EA depicts the routes associated with the HOWRY alternative.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The project study area encompasses the area within a 55 nautical mile radius centered on the airport radar surveillance site located at Offutt Air Force Base, located approximately 10 miles south of Eppley Field. Vertically, the study area extends from 3,000 to 18,000 feet above ground level. The study area includes portions of the states of Missouri, Nebraska, and Iowa.

The study area includes all areas where there would be a potential for environmental impacts. Figure 3-1 in the attached EA illustrates the OAR study area. Although there are 24 public use airports in the study area, the OAR project has the potential to affect only two other airports in addition to Eppley Field. They are Lincoln Municipal Airport and Offutt Air Force Base.

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The proposed airspace design and procedures were evaluated in the attached Final EA. No significant adverse impacts were identified. As such no Environmental Impact Statement is required to be or has been prepared.

Noise and Compatible Land Use

The Proposed Action would not result in a 1.5 dB increase in noise levels within the 65 or higher DNL noise contour. As such, no individuals would be newly subject to significant noise impacts. The number of individuals within the 60 to 65 DNL noise contour would increase by 15 in 2006, although the increase in noise would be less than 3 db; no additional persons would be exposed to noise levels within the 60 to 65 DNL contour in 2011. The Proposed Action would not affect the number of aircraft operations or involve the development of physical facilities.

Socioeconomic Impacts

The Proposed Action would not require the relocation of residences/businesses, disrupt established communities, disrupt planned development, or change roadway traffic patterns. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have no socioeconomic impacts.

Secondary or Induced Impacts

The Proposed Action would not impact businesses or economic activity, nor would it result in population shifts or additional public service demands. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have no secondary or induced impacts.

Air Quality

The Final Rule for Determining Conformity of General Federal Actions to State and Federal Implementation Plans, (40 CFR Parts 6, 51, and 93) was published in the Federal Register on November 3, 1993. In Section 51.853 (c)(2), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lists actions that are de minimis and, thus, do not require an applicable analysis under this rule. In addition to the de minimis exemptions that are listed in Section 51.853 (c)(2), EPA states in the preamble to this regulation (58 FR 63229) that it believes, "Air traffic control activities and adopting approach, departure, and en route procedures for air traffic operations are illustrative of de minimis actions."

Therefore, the Proposed Action would not violate any state or Federal air quality rules and regulations, and is in accordance with Section 176(c)(1) of the Clean Air Act as amended in 1990. This Proposed Action is presumed to conform and no further reporting is required.

Historic, Archaeological, Architectural, and Cultural Resources

The Proposed Action would not result in the development of physical facilities, only movement of flight tracks above 3,000 feet above ground level. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have no impact on historic, archaeological, architectural, and cultural resources

DOT Section 4(f) Lands (Recodified as 49 U.S.C., Subtitle I, Section 303(c))

The Proposed Action would not require a direct or indirect taking, nor cause substantial impairment or constructive use of any publicly owned land (local, state, or Federal) from a park, recreation area, or wildlife refuge for implementation of the Proposed Action. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have no impact on Section 4(f) properties.

Fish, Wildlife, and Plants

The Proposed Action would not result in the development of physical facilities. Therefore no significant impacts to fish, wildlife, or plants are expected. Although the Proposed Action would alter aircraft routes at altitudes greater than 3,000 feet above ground level, the incidence of bird strikes would be minimal.

Water Quality, Wetlands and Floodplains

The Proposed Action would not result in development of physical facilities. Therefore, no impacts to water quality, wetlands, or floodplains would occur.

Coastal Resources

The study area is not in a coastal zone or included in a Coastal Zone Management Program. Therefore, there would be no impacts with regard to coastal resources.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

No Wild and Scenic Rivers exist within the project area. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not impact wild and scenic rivers.

Farmlands

The Proposed Action would not result in development of physical facilities. Therefore, no impacts to farmlands would occur.

Natural Resources and Energy Supply

The Proposed Action would not affect stationary facilities or movement of ground vehicles at any airport, or require use of natural resources other than fuel that are in short supply. Implementation of the Proposed Action could alter aircraft fuel consumption to a slight degree, however any change would be insignificant.

Hazardous Materials, Pollution Prevention, Solid Waste, and Construction Impacts

The Proposed Action would not result in the development of physical facilities. Therefore, there would be no impacts with regard to construction activity, hazardous materials, or solid waste. As such, there is no need to address pollution prevention.

Light Emissions and Visual Impacts

The Proposed Action would not affect the number of aircraft operations or involve the development of physical facilities. The Proposed Action would occur at altitudes greater than 3,000 feet above ground level. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not cause significant light or visual impacts.

Environmental Justice and Children's Environmental Health and Safety Risks

No significant impacts for any environmental impact category have been identified with regard to implementation of the Proposed Action. Additionally, the composition of the community beneath the proposed flight tracks is similar to the community as a whole. No greater percentages of minority or low-income individuals exist in the study area than exist in the larger community. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not result in disproportionately high or adverse impacts for minority or low-income populations. Additionally, there would not be any project-related environmental health risks or safety risks that would disproportionately affect children.

Mitigation

Because the threshold of significance with regard to any environmental impact category is not exceeded due to the Proposed Action, no mitigation is being proposed as part of this project.

VIII. PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

A formal scoping period occurred from November 5, to December 12, 2003. Over 150 agency and elected officials were contacted. The FAA received three comments.

IX. THE AGENCY'S FINDINGS

In accordance with applicable law, the FAA makes the following determinations for this project, based upon the appropriate information and data contained in the Final EA and the administrative record.

A. This Proposed Action would not involve any construction, which may affect the existence of an endangered species. The project includes all practicable measures to minimize harm, which may result from it. [Endangered Species Act of 1974 PL 93-205, 16 U.S.C. 1531, as amended]

The Proposed Action does not involve physical development of facilities. Therefore, no impact to endangered or threatened species would occur and no mitigation is required.

B. This project would not involve any construction that may affect wetlands. The Proposed Action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm that may result from it. [Executive Order 19990, as amended]

The Proposed Action does not involve physical development of facilities. Therefore, no impact to wetlands would occur and no mitigation is required.

C. This project would not involve any construction, which may affect floodplains. The Proposed Action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to floodplains that may result from such use. [Executive Order 19998, as amended]

The Proposed Action does not involve physical development of facilities. Therefore, no impact to floodplains would occur and no mitigation is required.

D. This project would not affect use of lands subject to Section 4(f) of the DOT Act including significant historic sites. The Proposed Action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm resulting from it. [49 U.S.C. Section 303(c)]

The Proposed Action does not involve physical development of facilities. Therefore, no impact to historic sites would occur and no mitigation is required.

E. There are no disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects from the project on minority or low-income populations. [Executive Order 12898]

The Final EA demonstrates that no significant environmental impacts would occur for any environmental resource category. Additionally, the composition of the community beneath the proposed flight tracks is similar to the community as a whole. Therefore, it may be concluded that the Proposed Action would not have a disproportionately high or adverse effect on minority or low-income communities. Additionally, there would not be any project-related environmental health risks or safety risks that would disproportionately affect children.

F. This project will not involve the displacement or relocation of persons or businesses. Therefore, relocation assistance pursuant to the provisions in Title II of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisitions Policies Act of 1970, as amended is not applicable. [42 U.S.C. 4601 et. sec.]

The Proposed Action would not require the relocation of residences/businesses.

G. Clean Air Act, Section 176(c)(1) Conformity Determination for the Proposed Project. [42 U.S.C. Section 7506 (c)]

The determination prescribed by this statutory provision is a precondition for Federal agency support or approval more typically associated with airport development projects. This project

does not involve development of any facilities. The USEPA regulations generally governing the conformity determination process are found at 40 CFR Part 93, Subpart B, Sections 93.154 through 93.159, 40 CFR Part 50, and 40 CFR Part 51, Appendix W.

In addition to the de minimis exemptions listed in Section 51.853 (c)(2) of the Final Rule for Determining Conformity of General Federal Actions to State and Federal Implementation Plans, the EPA states in the preamble to this regulation that it believes, "Air traffic control activities and adopting approach, departure, and en route procedures for air operations are illustrative of de minimis actions." As such, the Proposed Action is exempt from General Conformity by 40 CFR Part 51, and no further reporting is required.

H. The FAA has given this proposal the independent and objective evaluation required by the Council on Environmental Quality. [40 CFR 1506.5]

As described in the Final EA and in Section IV of this FONSI/ROD, there was a detailed process that led to identification of a preferred alternative. Throughout, FAA air traffic control specialists provided expertise and guidance on technical matters that arose during the formative steps. The FAA evaluated the technical feasibility of the Proposed Action, and solely determined the alternatives to be evaluated for potential implementation. The proposed project represents the best judgment of the FAA in its key area of expertise, safe and efficient movement of air traffic.

Similarly, the FAA has conducted an independent review of the factual assumptions contained in the Final EA. Individuals from the FAA have devoted a substantial number of hours to insure compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, and any other environmental or other applicable requirements. Accordingly, I find that the independent and objective evaluation called for by the Council on Environmental Quality has been provided.

X. DECISIONS AND ORDERS

After careful and thorough consideration of the facts contained herein, the undersigned finds that the proposed Federal action is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in section 101 of the NEPA and other applicable environmental requirements and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment or otherwise include any condition requiring consultation pursuant to section 102(2)(C) of NEPA.

I, therefore, now approve and direct that actions be taken to carry out the approved alternative. This consists of development of air traffic control and airspace management procedures to establish and maintain safe and efficient handling and movement of traffic into and out of the airspace.

This FONSI/ROD presents the FAA's final decision and approvals for the actions identified, including those taken under the provisions of U.S.C. Subtitle VII. This decision constitutes a final order of the Administrator subject to review by the Court of Appeals of the United States in accordance with the provisions of 49 U.S.C. Section 46110.

Approved: Annette Davis
Annette Davis
Specialist, Airspace and Procedures Branch

11-18-05
Date